

WIPING OUT CRIME'S CANCER SPOT

The History of the Most Sin-Stained Section in Greater New York, Which Is About to Be Blotted Out of Existence, Written by INSPECTOR BYRNES.

WITH wiping out that sewer of sin, "Murderers' Alley," the lower west side section of the city will have been entirely riden of slums.

Nowhere else in the civilized world is there such a cesspool of sin and crime as this noisome "hole-in-the-wall." The buildings through which it passes, as well as those which surround it, are rookeries. They were erected more than half a century ago, and their existence was a menace to life, to health and to property.

During the civil war, when fugitive slaves came to New York in large numbers, the draft riots occurred in 1863 the alley was crowded with negroes, a few of whom were natives of this city, but most of them runaway slaves. The riots and the lawlessness which occurred in the few days of lawlessness did much to reduce the value of the horrible bunch of buildings. The places of those who went there were taken by an even viler set of

negro men and women. Robbery, assault, murder ran rampant in this outlaw section.

It is a fact and one which students of crime were never able to give a completely satisfactory reason for, that the fugitive slaves were more cruel, more vindictive and more murderous in their inclinations than were the negroes who had been brought up in New York. One would think that coming, as the runaways did, from settlements where every man and woman knew every other man and woman for miles about, that they would not possess an overpowering tendency to waylay, to pillage and to murder.

But theories were set at naught by facts. Old Captain John McCullagh was in charge of the Eighth Precinct, which stood at Prince and Wooster streets. I was in charge of the Fifteenth Precinct, in Mercer street, the patrol lines of precinct adjoining those of his on the north. I remember very well his telling me a murder

which had occurred there about 1872 or '73. A big, muscular, raw-boned negro named Jim Jackson and known as "Big Jim" was accused of having murdered a white woman who had voluntarily abandoned her white husband and two children and gone to live with the negro in the alley. Jackson escaped before the police were notified of the crime. It was afterward found that he had hidden himself in a cesspool, from which unpleasant prison he escaped to a basement on what was then Laurens street. It subsequently became South Fifth avenue and is now West Broadway.

The man was traced by some very shrewd work on the part of Patrolman Kenney, who was then doing duty under McCullagh, and who is now a sergeant in the same precinct. He noticed that a woman who was said to have caused the row between Jackson and his white consort went to this building, carrying baskets of food, at least once every day. He argued that where she went "Big Jim" was sure to be, and he communicated his suspicions to his captain. A rigid search of the place led to the discovery of the negro's hiding place. But while the police were forcing their way to him the hunted man endeavored to cheat the law by cutting his throat. His life was saved, however, both then and when he was put to trial for the murder, the jury in the case bringing in a verdict of man slaughter in a minor degree, punishment for which was but a few years in prison.

A half dozen years after he was discharged from prison, at the completion of his sentence, Jackson murdered another white woman who lived with him in the alley. This time he was arrested by Patrolman Ryan, who is now acting sergeant in the Eighth Precinct. There was such a conflict of testimony when the negro was put on trial for this second offense that he was acquitted. All that could be proved against him was that two nights before the body of the woman was discovered in her room overlooking the alley, the couple were heard swearing and yelling at each other, and that the man was beating the woman was evidenced by what she said. As the neighbors did not see or hear of either of the pair for something like forty

Last of a Famous Landmark of Crime.

One of the old-time slums of New York is to be eradicated. "Murderers' Alley," which runs through a network of rookeries from Sullivan to Thompson streets, about midway between Grand and Broome streets, is to be made a continuation of Watts street, so that that thoroughfare will connect two pulsating arteries of traffic—West Broadway and West street.

Ex-Superintendent of Police Byrnes, whose knowledge of crime and criminals is surpassed by no one, has written a special article about the noisome alley for the Sunday Journal.

The Dregs of Human Kind.

"The people who have sought it out as a place in which to make a home have always been the dregs of human kind, the most depraved, the most vicious, the most brutal of their race.

Always Darkness There.

"At night the place was in cave-like darkness. Every effort that was made to keep gas lamps burning in the alley was frustrated by the denizens of the place, who would cut the pipes, smash the lamps, or do anything to rid themselves of light, which would interfere with the commission of crime.

Worse Than Paris or London Slums

"I have seen the slums of Paris, both along the river and along the line of the old fortifications at the outer side of the heights of Mont Marte, and I have been through the world-notorious 'Seven Dials' and the foul-smelling White-chapel district of London, but nowhere did I see a spot where so much crime was concentrated."

hours they reported the matter to the police, and when the door of the single room which they occupied was broken open the body of the woman was found.

George Taylor, another negro loafer, murdered a mulatto woman who was supposed to be his wife, on Sullivan street, just below the alley. He consorted with the crowd of thugs and thieves whose headquarters were in this hang-out of murderers. He beat his victim to death with some blunt instrument. That was about thirteen years ago. The jury before whom he was tried did not think it right to put him to death.

The last murder which occurred in the alley was, I think, that of Eboe Williams, who was killed by Samuel Smith Brewster. Both the murderer and the man whose life was taken were negroes. Williams was killed right by the arch which forms one end of the alley.

Those who are thoroughly well informed

ATTACKS ON THE QUEEN.

Queen Victoria's Numerous Escapes from Assassination Since Ascending the Throne.

On June 22 Queen Victoria, who is now in her seventy-ninth year, will have reigned sixty years. In doing this she has had to surmount dangers which do not beset ordinary mortals.

In spite of the Queen's amiable and irreproachable character and her unvarying and scrupulous regard for the Constitution of her country, she has been the subject of several attempts on her life. They have all failed entirely, but at least three of them came near to doing harm. The Queen showed considerable personal courage on these occasions.

The first attempt was made by Edward Oxford, on June 10, 1840. He discharged a pistol at Her Majesty when she was going up Constitution Hill. The man was quite mad, and after being captured was sent to Bedlam and thence to Dartmoor, where, after thirty-five years, he was transported to Australia, where he set up in business as a house painter.

Nearly two years later, on May 30, 1842, and almost in the same place, John Francis fired at the Queen. He was sentenced to death for this act, but was afterward reprieved and was transported to Tasmania.

The third attempt was made on July 3 by a deformed youth named John William Bean, but his pistol missed fire. He was imprisoned for eighteen months in Newgate.

Again, in May, on the 19th, in the year 1840, and a third time on Constitution Hill, William Hamilton fired at Her Majesty. He, however, was only sentenced to transportation for seven years for this act.

In the following year Lieutenant Pate committed another outrage, but he had no murderous intent. Just as Her Majesty was leaving Cambridge House Pate struck her over the face with a cane, and like Hamilton, was sentenced to transportation for seven years.

The last occasion on which anybody attempted to injure Her Majesty was two days after the Thanksgiving for the recovery of the Prince of Wales, when a young man named Arthur O'Connor approached Her Majesty's carriage in the courtyard of Buckingham Palace and threatened the Queen with a pistol. John Brown, who was then Her Majesty's closest personal attendant, seized the youth and took the revolver from him, which was found to be unloaded.

about the place and the persons who peopled it are confident that more murders than those which were discovered by the police have occurred there. Upward of a hundred cases of assault and robbery were charged against the place in less than ten years. For a long time it was absolutely unsafe for a prosperous looking man to walk by the place, even in broad daylight. Either the women loungers about there would make every effort to lure the stranger into the alley or the male negroes would provoke a quarrel with him so as to rob him under the cover of the row. Drunken men by the dozen who have wandered along the lower end of Sullivan and of Thompson streets, not knowing just where they were going, were beaten and robbed.

The records of the precinct station house show that something like a dozen dead bodies have been taken out of this murderers' paradise. The bodies were mainly those of women. They bore bruises and wounds which indicated clearly that foul means had been used to remove them. But there was no one to identify these wayward creatures. They had been away from home and friends so long that their existence had been forgotten by the few persons who had an honest interest in them.

Police men evaded doing patrol duty on the post which covered this place, and "Lightning Charlie" McDonald, who was in charge of the precinct for many years, put none but his best fighting men there.

After the negroes began to leave the alley some fifteen years ago German rappers and bone gatherers located there, and the place was known as "Shinbone Alley," in contradistinction to "Bone Alley" over on the East Side. The Germans were in turn driven out by the Irish. But the place was too filthy for such respectable tenants, and they retired to give place to a revitalization of the colored element. For the last half dozen years the Italian element has been crowding in there thicker and thicker, and now, although the alley is not over ten feet wide and is a little short of a hundred feet in length, it is the sheltering place for almost eight

hundred human beings. Think of it! More men, women and children on two small-sized city lots than are to be found in many a peaceful and prosperous hamlet.

Is it any wonder that it has been a nest of crime for many years? The people who have sought it out as a place in which to make a home have always been the dregs of human kind, the most depraved, the most vicious, the most brutal of their race. No matter what crime a man or woman might commit, he or she could always find some other person there as low and as debased who would provide shelter and aid in every way to evade the officers of the law.

At night the place was in cave-like darkness. Every effort that was made to keep gas lamps burning in the alley was frustrated by the denizens of the place, who would cut the pipes, smash the lamps or do anything to rid themselves of light, which would interfere with the commission of crime. I have seen the slums of Paris both along the river and along the line of the old fortifications at the outer side of

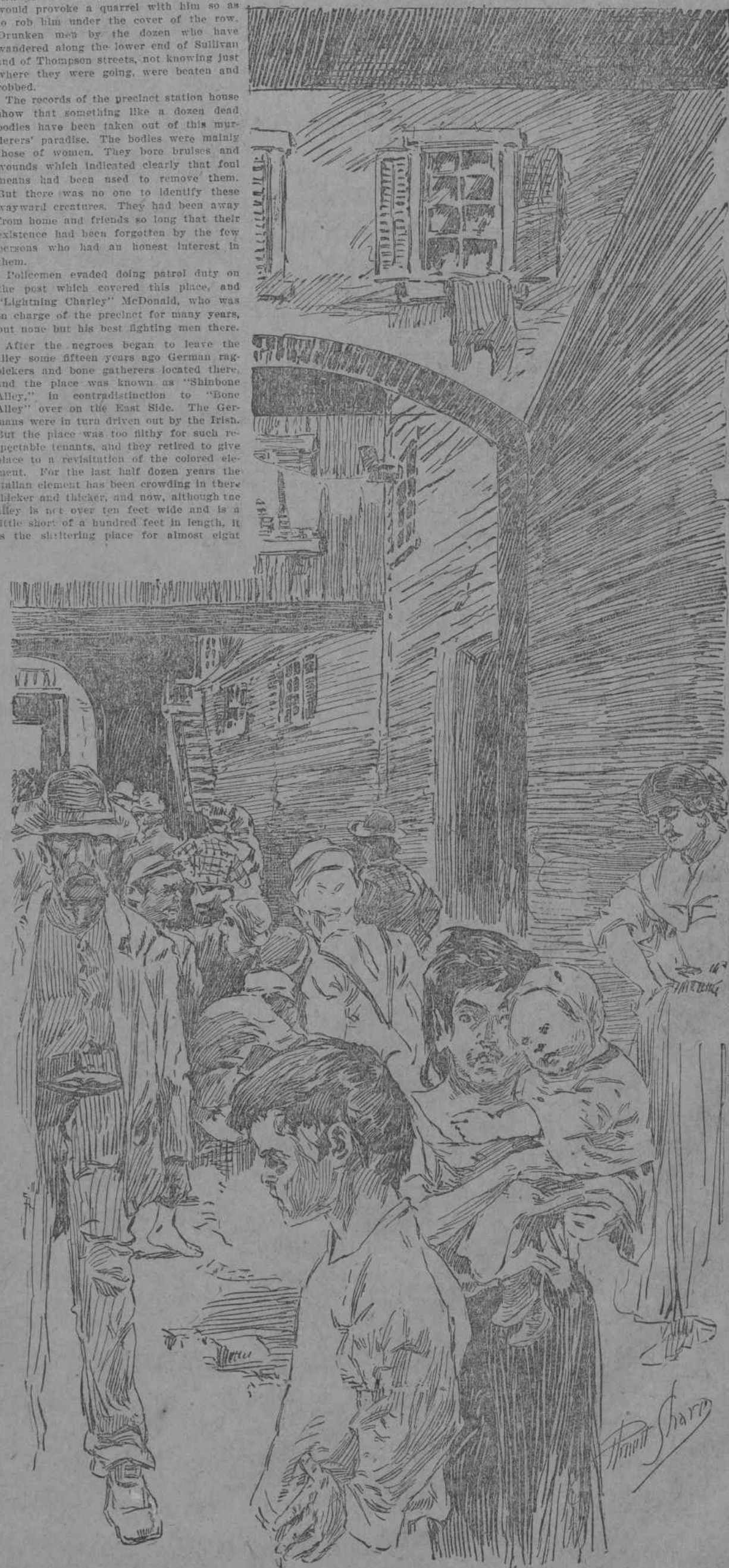
the heights of Montmartre, and I have been through the world-notorious "Seven Dials" and the foul-smelling White-chapel district of London, but nowhere did I see a spot where so much crime was concentrated as the records show for "Murderers' Alley."

The place is and has long been a pest-hole, a fire trap, a criminals' paradise. Within the past decade, but the work has been a difficult one. The opening at Watts street through this network of rookeries will have as salutary an effect upon the territory tributary to it as the cutting of Worth street through the Five Points has upon the noisome district which it opened up to improvement. Watts street, with its rows of old-fashioned dwelling houses, is clean, bright and inviting from the river's edge to where it ends, a few feet from the old alley. Its purity will wash out of the filth, the crime, the nameless sins, and all that is horrible in the soon to be forgotten Murderers' alley.

THOMAS BYRNES,
Ex-Superintendent of Police.



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(FROM A SNAP SHOT PHOTOGRAPH.)



'The Sheltering Place of Over Eight Hundred Miserable Creatures, Mostly Criminals.'
(FROM A SNAP SHOT PHOTOGRAPH.)